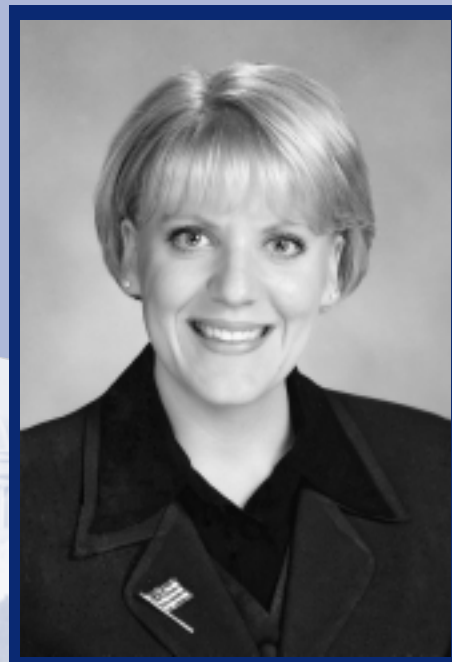




For more information about the
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2004 Session Review

Rep. Janéa Holmquist

13th Legislative District

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May 2004

Dear friends and neighbors,

Our ongoing commitment to create high-demand, high-paying jobs for citizens and restore trust in government guided the efforts of House Republicans throughout the 2004 legislative session in Olympia. Although the session was scheduled for just 60 days, lawmakers addressed significant issues aimed at creating jobs, improving access to health care and bringing prosperity to communities and families.

Results were mixed. We made progress in our push to improve Washington's competitiveness, but more remains to be done. This newsletter provides a summary of key issues addressed during the recently completed session. As always, I welcome your questions and ideas, and look forward to assisting you if you need help with state government.

Since returning home from Olympia, I have been delighted to visit and share legislative updates with community groups such as chambers of commerce, Rotary groups, 4-H clubs, etc. If your group would like a legislative update, please feel free to contact me. I am honored to serve as your state representative.

Sincerely,

Janéa Holmquist
State Representative
Asst. Republican Floor Leader

Job creation, trust in government set the tone for 2004

With a strong emphasis on bringing jobs to Washington and restoring citizen's trust in government, lawmakers embarked on a relatively big agenda during a short 60-day legislative session. The following is a summary of key legislation passed, as well as measures on which we were unable to reach a consensus.

The good

Tax incentives for job creation

An important set of tax credits and deferrals for employers that generate jobs in rural areas was scheduled to expire this year. Some 560 companies use these tax incentives, and business leaders need them to be competitive in attracting high-demand, high-paying jobs.

The Legislature extended these tax incentives to diversify and strengthen our job pool, especially in our rural communities.

I worked with a local business to approve a utility tax credit protecting 35 family-wage jobs in Grant County and ensuring Eka Chemicals stays in business. House Bill 2518 will put this energy-dependent plant on an even playing field with competitors throughout North America, since similar electrolytic businesses are not paying this tax.

Tougher laws against child molesters

One of the biggest achievements of the session was adoption of The Child Protection Act of 2004 (HB 2400). The measure toughens the law against child molesters. It also provides major revisions to the state's Special Sex Offender Sentencing Alternative law (SSOSA), which has allowed serious offenders to avoid lengthy prison sentences by opting for community-based treatment. This policy of returning sex offenders to the streets has haunted victims and their families.

The bill makes serious offenders ineligible for SSOSA, establishes longer minimum sentences, and *gives victims a voice in offender supervision and treatment.*

Holding drunk drivers accountable

I was extremely proud to work with prosecutors and law enforcement officers across the state to successfully sponsor legislation to help secure convictions against drunk drivers. A glitch in the state's statute pertaining to breathalyzer tests has allowed drunk drivers to avoid conviction based on hypertechnicalities. House Bill 3055 clarifies the law to allow breathalyzer tests to be admissible as evidence. This bill will ensure drunk drivers are kept off the roads and punished for their offenses.

Work in progress

Supplemental operating budget

In 2003, House Republicans fought for and successfully adopted a balanced budget without raising general fund taxes. In 2004, the challenge before us was to make adjustments to the two-year budget to cover costs over the remainder of the biennium without abandoning the sound budget principles in the original budget.

Budget negotiators reached a compromise that attempts to realize this balance. The 2004 supplemental budget funded many worthwhile services, such as health care for low-income children, services for the developmentally disabled, and a 1 percent pay increase to classified public school employees. **Yet the truth is we are spending more than we can afford over the long term** and that is why I voted against the budget. It will again require tough decisions in 2005 to balance the next budget without tax increases.

2004 BUDGET OVERVIEW

- Increases general fund spending for 2003-05 by \$165 million.
- Leaves reserves of \$278 million — about 1.2 percent of total revenues.
- Increases investments in K-12 public schools by \$20 million.
- One percent increase for classified public school employees to help offset healthcare costs.
- Includes \$113.3 million in new funding to protect health care and other human services for the state's most vulnerable citizens.
- **Leaves the state with a projected \$1 billion budget shortfall in 2005-07.**

Small-group insurance reform

Seventy-six percent of Washingtonians work for a small business. Many working families can't get health care coverage because it's too expensive for their employers. Washington's uninsured has risen to nearly 17 percent, due in part to excessive government rules that tell health insurers what they must put in their health plans.

I supported **House Bill 3104**, which would have provided the flexibility needed to help small employers provide their workers with affordable health insurance by encouraging carrier competition to produce more affordable, targeted and creative small-group plans. Unfortunately, the meaningful changes needed lost out to an eleventh-hour proposal making only small improvements to the small-group health care market. Small-group insurance reform will remain a top priority for me next session.



Water policy reforms

Correcting the flawed use-it-or-lose-it policies that lead to unfair water right relinquishments is an ongoing battle for us in Olympia. While we continue to make progress on this issue, we were unable to enact the real reforms needed.



However, I was quite pleased we were able to achieve a victory for irrigators on the Odessa sub-area aquifer. We approved House Bill 2504, which would allow irrigators to supplant groundwater with surface water from the Columbia Basin Project without losing their water right. This protects the aquifer level without threatening irrigators with relinquishment due to non-use. This is the kind of common-sense water policy that we've been fighting for and may be the landmark legislation we need to bring about meaningful reforms statewide.

Regulatory reform

Last year several regulatory reforms were adopted by the Legislature, only to be vetoed by the governor. This year I worked to pass a compromise measure (**House Bill 2598**) that will make it easier for citizens affected unfairly by state agency rules to challenge those rules. My bill allows rules to be challenged in four counties throughout Washington, including Yakima, Spokane, Whatcom and Thurston. Until now, all such legal challenges against the state had to be filed in Thurston County, giving state agencies a "home-court advantage." My bill will allow small business owners and working families to have their grievances heard closer to home.

House Republicans proposed additional reforms this session to improve public trust in the regulatory system, but they were rejected by Democrat leaders.

The disappointing

Liability/medical malpractice reform

Civil litigation abuse and exposure to liability dramatically affect the ongoing costs and risks for health care providers and employers doing business in Washington. Large jury awards, settlements, and inefficiencies have led to skyrocketing insurance premiums. This harms all of us as consumers by preventing access to affordable health care, increasing the cost of housing, and hurting our economy.

To help create jobs and build trust in government, House Republicans sponsored **House Bill 3030** and **House Bill 2191**, which would have reformed the tort system to make it more fair, predictable and timely. In response, House Democrats proposed only incremental changes falling far short of the bold reforms needed to address this crisis. Little progress was made this session to stop rising liability costs that are forcing doctors out of practice, hurting employers, and strangling local government.

A new primary system in Washington

You will notice a difference in the way we vote in our state's September primary. Washington's popular blanket primary was declared unconstitutional and action was taken by the state parties placing us in a position to implement a new system or risk having no primary.

I know it is critical to ensure you have a voice and that we continue having primary elections in Washington. I fought and will continue to fight to protect your independence and privacy, by not requiring public declaration of party affiliation and mandatory party registration.

I voted against the measure passed this session implementing a new primary, known as the "Top Two." The bill that passed had a backup plan of a "Montana style" primary if the "Top Two" failed to pass muster with the courts. Due to a partial veto by the governor, we are currently left with a "Montana style" primary. *This issue will most likely be settled in court or by citizen initiative, and our primary will probably resemble one of the following systems:*

TOP TWO PRIMARY – The top-two primary would allow voters to cast a vote for any one candidate in each race, regardless of party. Then the top two vote getters in each primary race would move on to the general election, even if they are from the same party.

While the system protects the voters' choice in the primary, it may limit their choice of candidates in the November general election, since it may result in a general election race between two Democrats or two Republicans. It also leaves third-party candidates with little or no chance of having a candidate on the November ballot.

MONTANA STYLE PRIMARY – This system would require a voter to select a primary ballot for a given party and would limit the voter's selections to that party's candidates. While somewhat limiting the voters' choice, this system has the advantage of maintaining voter privacy. No party registration is required and no record of the voter's ballot selection is kept.

For more information about the issues before the state Legislature, visit my Web site at:

<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/holmquist.htm>



District office reopens in Moses Lake

Monthly office hours in Yakima and Ellensburg

With the Legislature adjourned for the year, I reopened my 13th District legislative office in Moses Lake. I will also resume hosting district office hours one day a month in both Ellensburg and Moxee to give constituents near those communities better access to their representative.

I want to do my very best to be available to you and assist you however I can with state government. I invite you to share your thoughts and ideas on state government issues.

You can also continue to reach me by leaving a message on the toll-free **Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000**, or by e-mail at holmquis_ja@leg.wa.gov.

Rep. Janéa Holmquist

13th District Office – Moses Lake

Central Bonded Collectors Building
408 W. 4th Street

Phone: (509) 766-6585 Fax: (509) 766-6586

Hours 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday

Ellensburg District Office Hours

First Thursday of each month

Commissioner's Auditorium
Kittitas County Courthouse
205 West 5th Avenue

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Moxee District Office Hours

First Wednesday of each month

Moxee City Hall
255 West Seattle Ave.

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Rep. Janéa Holmquist is congratulated by Gov. Gary Locke after he signed her bill to strengthen convictions against drunk drivers (HB 3055).

**13th District
2004
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Review**

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Janéa Holmquist
State Representative

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